

## Surah Zumar

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the preceding *Sūrah* Ṣu‘ād. It begins with the subject on which the last *sūrah* ended. It is mentioned in *Sūrah* Ṣu‘ād that this Qur’ān is a great reminder for the people of this world; it is reminding people that the Day of Judgement is certain to come; every one will have to face their real Lord on that Day; so those who are denying it today will very soon observe its veracity from their very eyes. *Sūrah* Ṣu‘ād begins with this very topic that the Almighty has revealed this Book in a thorough and elaborate way so that it can give its verdict on the differences which people have created about *tawhīd* (monotheism); as a consequence, the truth will become evident and those who because of their supposed deities have no fear of the Hereafter are afforded with an opportunity to reflect on their fate before it is too late. With respect to this premise, the *sūrah* mentions the arguments in support of *tawhīd* and also refutes polytheism and false deities and portrays the dreadful fate which the Idolaters will meet in the Hereafter. The *sūrah* is based on *tawhīd*, and the Day of Judgement is mentioned due its relationship with *tawhīd*. This *sūrah* is among those *sūrahs* of this group that were revealed in that period when the signs of migration to Madīnah had come to the fore. Thus, this subject gradually becomes prominent in the later *sūrahs*.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-4):** The all-knowing and wise God has revealed this Book as a final verdict to once and for all end the debate between monotheism and polytheism. So people should worship and obey Him only. He alone is worthy of worship and obedience. If people who have set up other deities to procure the nearness of God are not professing faith in it, then God will decide their fate on the Day of Judgement and they should remember that God will not let liars and ingrates succeed on that Day. God is far exalted to have sons and daughters. He is the one and only and is enough to control the whole of the universe.

**Verses (5-8):** God has created this world with a purpose and there is wisdom behind it. It is at His behest that alternation of night and day and

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movements of the sun and the moon take place. It is He Who has created man and it is He Who has created the means for His nourishment. If He is the sole creator and Lord and He alone has knowledge of all the affairs of His universe and is its Master, then where are people wandering about running away from Him. People should remember that God is not in need of their worship and gratitude; in fact, they themselves are in need of Him; everyone is destined to return to God; on that Day, no one will bear the burden of any other person; the Almighty is fully aware of all the secrets and He will reveal each and every deed a person did before him. When people are afflicted with some hardship, they beseech God and when He delivers them of this hardship they totally ignore Him as if they never had any relation with Him.

**Verses (9-21):** Glad tidings of success are given to God's servants who are being oppressed by the miscreants of their nation merely because they had professed in *tawhīd*. They are urged to adhere to their faith. If it becomes difficult for them to live in this land, then the land of God is spacious enough for them. He abundantly rewards those who remain steadfast in His cause. After this, a declaration of acquittal is sounded from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to polytheism and polytheists. The latter are warned of punishment and glad tidings are given to those who adhere to the *tawhīd*. Finally, people who are denying the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) because of arrogance are warned. The source of their arrogance is their worldly affluence.

**Verses (22-35):** The Prophet (sws) is assured that only those people will profess faith in this Qur'ān whose nature is alive; people whose hearts are hardened will not profess faith in it. They will reach the fate which is met by nations that are destroyed for denying their respective messenger. The Qur'ān has fully explained in detail the reality of monotheism and polytheism; Hell is the abode of people who still show stubbornness.

**Verses (36-52):** The Prophet is given assurance that if these people are striking fear of their deities in him, he should tell them that God is sufficient for his protection; no one can deprive him of God's mercy if it has been ordained from Him, and if God wants to harm him in any way, then no one can save him; hence, they should do what they want and he will do what he wants; the decision rests with God.

It is explained that life and death is fully under God's authority; so the Prophet (sws) should tell those who are banking upon the wrong notion of intercession that intercession too is in under God's control. He is directed to consign the matter of such people to God and is also advised to pray for them.

The actual reason of arrogance of the arrogant is referred to: they think that the wealth and status which God has bestowed upon them is the

result of their own planning; before them also were people who were afflicted with this infatuation. When they were seized with God, their planning could be of no avail to them. Wealth and sustenance is a gift of God. Hence thanking Him is imperative on every one and this is what *tawhīd* entails.

**Verses (53-61):** People are reminded of the fact that losing hope in God and seeking other deities and intercessors is not the correct way. They should, in fact, turn to Him in all circumstances. He is very forgiving and merciful. Hence before He seizes them, people should turn to Him and profess faith in this magnificent Book which the Almighty has revealed for their guidance. Otherwise, a day will come when they will yearn to profess faith and severely regret their deprivation. However, this shall be of no avail to them because the time for professing faith would have passed.

**Verses (62-75):** This is the closing section of the *sūrah* in which it is first explained that only God is worthy of worship; He alone is the Creator of everything and the keys of the heavens and the earth are in His jurisdiction. After this the Idolaters are addressed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) and told that they ask him to worship other deities even though it has been divinely revealed to him and to other prophets before him that the deeds of people who set up partners with God will come to nothing. After this, the Idolaters are rebuked that they did not recognize the majesty of God; they live on the intercession of false deities. The fact is that when the trumpet is sounded everyone will fall down unconscious. And when the trumpet is sounded again everyone will rise up; the earth shall become radiant with the light of God; the register shall be opened; prophets and witnesses will be called forth and judgement will be passed between people with full fairness. After this, the details of the circumstances of the dwellers of Hell and Paradise are depicted.

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## Section I: Verses (1-8)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١) إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ (٢) أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣) لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَأَصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٤) خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٥) خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَانزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَىٰ تُصْرَفُونَ (٦) إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٧) وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِنْهُ نِسِيَ مَا كَانَ يُدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ (٨)

This book is revealed in a thorough manner by God, the Mighty, the Wise One. Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. Those who have set up other protectors besides Him, say: "We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to God." God will resolve the issues on which they are differing. God will not let liars and ungrateful to succeed. (1-3)

Had it been God's intention to create children, He would have chosen whom He pleased out of His own Creation. God is exalted and lofty; He is God, the One, the Almighty. (4)

He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose. He causes the night to cover the day and the day to cover the night, and He has made the sun and the moon obedient to Him, each punctually following a path. Listen up! He alone is the Mighty, the Forgiving One. (5)

It is He Who created you from a single soul, then from its genre created its pair and sent down for you eight different kinds of cattle

[both male and female]. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, one stage after the other in threefold darkness. Such is God, your Lord. To Him belongs the sovereignty. There is no god but Him. So where are you made to wander away? (6)

If you show ingratitude, God does not need you. Yet the ingratitude of His servants does not please Him. And if you are grateful to Him, this will please Him. And no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return; so He will inform you what you have been doing. He also knows the secrets of the chests. (7)

And when some calamity befalls man, he pleads to his Lord turning to Him in penitence; yet when He bestows on him His favour, he forgets what he had been pleading for and makes other deities God's equals in order to lead men away from His path. Say: "Enjoy your disbelief awhile; you will soon become the companions of Hell." (8)

### Explanation

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١)<sup>1</sup>

I have explained the word تَنْزِيلُ at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr* and pointed out that this word does not merely mean "to reveal"; it, in fact, means "to reveal in an elaborate manner and with thoroughness." This introductory verse is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and warn the rejecters of the Qur'ān. The assurance meant for the Prophet (sws) is that he has not authored this Book nor requested God to reveal it to him; on the contrary, the Almighty Himself has revealed it to him gradually and is still revealing it to him in this piecemeal manner; so he should rest assured that He Himself will prove its veracity before others and pave the way for this; the God Who has revealed it to him is not a helpless being. He is powerful and dominant; He can do anything He intends to; no one can impede His intention to materialize; however, together with عَزِيزٌ He is also حَكِيمٌ; hence, if the Prophet (sws) is facing hardships in the cause of God or may face them in future, then He should deem that there is some wisdom in this scheme; nothing happens without His directive and all His actions are based on prudence and wisdom.

The warning sounded to the rejecters is that this Book has been revealed with God in a gradual and thorough manner for the guidance of people; this entails certain obligations towards it: people should give it due importance and receive the light of guidance from it; if they adopt a contrary attitude, then they should remember that this is not the petition

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1. This book is revealed in a thorough manner by God, the Mighty, the Wise One.

of a pleader; it is the ordinance of God that has to be obeyed at all cost; He can do anything He wants; if in spite of this, He is giving respite to the rejecters, it is only because His wisdom requires this.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ (٢) أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ  
وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ  
بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣)<sup>2</sup>

The word حَقٌّ here means “decisive word” and the word دِينَ here means “obedience”.

These verses address the Prophet (sws) and tell him that this Book has been revealed to him as a decisive word. It has given its verdict regarding the differences which have created by the innovators and the polytheists in the concept of *tawhīd*. This verdict is that the Prophet (sws) should only worship God with sincere obedience to Him. It is only He Who is worthy of sincere obedience. He is the creator and Lord of everyone; He only He deserves to be worshipped and He who only deserves to be worshipped should only be shown obedience to. It is totally illogical that the one worshipped should be different to the one shown obedience too. Just as it is essential that worship be sincere and unadulterated, it is also essential that obedience be sincere and unadulterated. It is not permissible to obey someone in defiance to God.

The reason that the Prophet (sws) is addressed here is that after the revelation of this Book his path has been determined; he should tread on it only; if others accompany him, it is well and good other he should leave them alone; he is not responsible for them.

The words وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ point to the fact that if there are some people who are not accepting the judgement of this Book, then the Almighty will pass His judgment on them on the Day of Judgement. The reference is to people who have set up partners with God and have invented this philosophical belief about them that they are not worshipping them by regarding them to be God; they are only worshipping them because they are a means to procure God’s nearness.

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2. Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. Those who have set up other protectors besides Him, say: “We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to God.” God will resolve the issues on which they are differing. God will not let liars and ungrateful to succeed.

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Consider next the part: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ**. The verb **يَهْدِي** is also used in the Qur'ān at many places to connote making someone succeed in his objective. I have explained this at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

A principle statement is given regarding the judgement that will be passed about these people on the Day of Judgement: the Almighty will not make liars and ingrates succeed. The liars here refer to those who forged this lie on God that He has made such and such His partners even though the Almighty has not revealed any such testimony in their matter. The ingrates referred to here are the ones who received all their favours and gifts from God yet they thanked others instead of God for them. Both these attributes are of the polytheists and are necessarily found in every polytheist. The verse says that these people are denying the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) on the basis of the conceited notion that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, they will procure the nearness of God through their deities; the fact is that no hope of such liars and ingrates will materialize with God.

لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَاصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٤)<sup>3</sup>

This verse insinuates at a belief of the polytheists: they worship the angels after regarding them to be daughters of God and think that they are a means of winning favour with God; these foolish people have not even cared to think that if God wanted to produce children for Himself why would He have created daughters; He would have selected the best of His creations for this purpose. The word **سُبْحَانَهُ** refers to the fact that He is exalted and beyond such ascriptions and needs. He does not need a son or a daughter or any partner or helper. He is sole and singular and has the power to fully control the affairs of this universe.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ  
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٥)<sup>4</sup>

God has not created the heavens and earth without a purpose. Hence it

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3. Had it been God's intention to create children, He would have chosen whom He pleased out of His own Creation. God is exalted and lofty; He is God, the One, the Almighty.

4. He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose. He causes the night to cover the day and the day to cover the night, and He has made the sun and the moon obedient to Him, each punctually following a path. Listen up! He alone is the Mighty, the Forgiving One.

is not possible that vice and virtue, falsehood and truth not be dealt with separately nor is it possible that a person whatever his beliefs and deeds may be secure for himself high status before God on the basis of some intercessors. If this were so, then this world becomes a meaningless place, and it is beyond the majesty of a wise and a just creator to do meaningless things.

The words **يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ** وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلَّ يَجْرِى لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى imply that no one should remain in the misconception that after the creating the world, the Almighty became a mere spectator to its affairs or is aloof from its affairs; the fact is that it is He alone Who covers the day by the night and covers the night by the day; it is He Who has put the sun and the moon in the service of man and all the heavenly bodies move in their orbit according to a systematically prescribed time-table. Nothing can dare deviate from this time-table for a second.

The words **أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفَّارُ** ask the people to listen up: God is powerful (**عَزِيزٌ**) as well as very forgiving (**عَفَّارٌ**). Since He is powerful, no one can have access to Him without His permission nor intercede for someone. Since He is very forgiving, He will Himself forgive people who become worthy of forgiveness; they will not require the services of any intercessor.

خَلَقَكُمْ مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِّن بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَآَنَى تُصْرَفُونَ (٦)<sup>5</sup>

This verse further explains what is said in the previous one: when God is the Creator and He alone has set up this whole system of providence for His creatures and only He has knowledge of each and every thing, then on what basis can some other being become the Lord. Why do people who acknowledge all these obvious facts lose their senses by imputing partners to Him?

The words **خَلَقَكُمْ مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا** imply that it is God Who has created every one from a single soul, and then created its mate from the same species. All humanity is born of Adam (sws) and the

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5. It is He Who created you from a single soul, then from its genre created its pair and sent down for you eight different kinds of cattle [both male and female]. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, one stage after the other in threefold darkness. Such is God, your Lord. To Him belongs the sovereignty. There is no god but Him. So where are you made to wander away?



Creator of all humanity is the Almighty. Moreover, it is God Who created Adam's mate from his species. When the Creator of everyone is God and no one denies this fact, then from where does the provision of other deities arise?

The words وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ refer to the fact that the Almighty Who has created man also made arrangements for his nourishment and sustenance. It was not that after creating him, He made some others responsible for this task. All these cattle on which depends their livelihood and economy have been created by Him and no one else.

Here the words أَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ (He sent down for you) are used in the way the words أَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ (We sent down iron) are used in Sūrah Ḥadīd (57:25). This style is employed by the Qur'ān for many objects and the purpose is to direct the attention of people to the real source: it is God Who sends down all things. He sent down iron and as a result it was produced in the earth and from it man was able to invent various types of armour. Similarly, He sent down the cattle and as a result they spread in the earth to fulfill the economic needs of man. It is this perception of reality which inculcates true gratitude in man otherwise man's observation is often entangled in the immediate cause and source of things, and he forgets his real Lord.

Consider next the expression: ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ. The word زَوْجٌ (singular of أَزْوَاجٍ) refers to a pair as well as to the individual member of a pair. Here, it is used in this latter meaning. In Arabia, four types of domestic cattle were very common; among the smaller breeds were goats and lambs and among the larger ones were buffaloes and camels. The word أَنْعَام was used for these animals. If both genders of these species are counted, they come out to be eight. The Arabs mostly depended on these animals for their livelihood. For this reason, the Almighty referred to them while reminding the Arabs here of His providence. If more details are required on this topic, readers may look up my explanation of verses 143-144 of Sūrah An'ām.

After reminding people of God's creativity and His providence the words are meant to remind them of God's power, skill and all embracing knowledge. It is said that it is God Who makes the foetus pass through various phases of creation in the wombs of mothers in three layers darkness. These phases of creation are referred to in the following words in Sūrah Mu'minūn:

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا

الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَدْنَيْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ (٢٣: ١٤)

Then We make the sperm into a clot of coagulated blood, then We make the clot into a lump of flesh, then We create bones in this lump of flesh. Then We clothe the bones with flesh, and then We bring it forth as another creation. (23:14)

The three layers of darkness refer to the membrane, the womb and the hollow in which the womb is enclosed. The implication is that the skilful hand of God does not demonstrate its creativity in the light of the sun; it does so in within an area covered by three layers. This bears witness that God's knowledge embraces everything.

The words *دَلِيلُكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ* refer to the fact that the God Who has done all these favours on these people is their Lord and Master; He owns everything and to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; none else than Him is worthy of worship; so what then makes them lose their senses and they deviate from the right path and stray into error. Use of the passive verb *تُصْرَفُونَ* is meant to convey that after these manifest facts there was room for anyone to err, but they have consigned their reigns to some devil who is leading them into darkness and taking them away from the truth.

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ  
وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ  
عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ<sup>٦</sup> (٧)

The word *تَكْفُرُوا* here connotes “ingratitude” and “thanklessness”. The word *تَشْكُرُوا* occurs in contrast to it and as such delineate its meaning. What is implied is that no one has any role in creating man and in nurturing Him; if, in spite of this, people are showing ingratitude to Him by ascribing partners to Him, they should remember that they are in no way harming God. He does not require their gratitude or ingratitude; He does not need them; it is they, on the contrary, who need Him. If they are grateful to Him, He will be pleased with this attitude and will bless them in this world and also richly reward them in the Hereafter. If they

6. If you show ingratitude, God does not need you. Yet the ingratitude of His servants does not please Him. And if you are grateful to Him, this will please Him. And no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return; so He will inform you what you have been doing. He also knows the secrets of the chests.

are ungrateful to Him, then they should remember that God does not like this attitude from His servants and they will have to face its consequences.

The words *وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ* imply that each soul is itself answerable to God; no one will be answerable for any other person. If they think that their deities will intercede for them before God and save them from His wrath then this false hope will never materialize. The Almighty will present the account of each person's deeds before him. He has full knowledge of the secrets found in the hearts of people. Neither does He need to ask a person for any information about another person nor will there be anyone who will add anything to His knowledge about some other person.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ  
مِن قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِّیُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ  
النَّارِ (٨)<sup>7</sup>

This verse expresses sorrow and wonder on the attitude of ungratefulness of man: strange is his matter; whenever he is afflicted with some hardship, he pleads to God with great humility and devotion; however, as soon as God delivers him of this affliction and blesses Him out of His grace, he forgets this state and ascribes the favours blessed to Him by God to associates of God; in this way, he deviates from the path of God and also causes others to deviate from His path. Here since the attitude of the leaders of the disbelievers is under discussion, hence the transitive verb *لِيُضِلَّ* is used. It means that they lead others astray; this is inclusive of the fact that they themselves are already astray.

This topic is discussed in the following words ahead:

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا نَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ (٣٩: ٤٩)

So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourselves, he says: "I acquired

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7. And when some calamity befalls man, he pleads to his Lord turning to Him in penitence; yet when He bestows on him His favour, he forgets what he had been pleading for and makes other deities God's equals in order to lead men away from His path. Say: "Enjoy your disbelief awhile; you will soon become the companions of Hell."

this through my planning.” (39:49)

Human nature is aware of just one God. So whenever a person is in real need, He turns to this God and pleads and invokes Him. However, once a person is relieved of his hardship he forgets it and also becomes indifferent to God. He then ascribes the favour bestowed to him by God to other supposed deities or to his own capability and intelligence and in this way himself becomes a partner to God.

Prior to the words *قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ*, the address was general; however, since the purpose was to direct attention to the state of those addressed, the Prophet (sws) was directed in the above words to inform them that in spite of their ingratitude and disbelief they shall be given respite so that they can benefit from the favours of God for sometime; eventually, they will become the fuel of Hell and it will punish them fully for all their blunders.

### Section II: Verses (9-20)

First, attention is directed at the fact that people who have invented the beliefs of polytheism and intercession have actually equated the righteous with the wrong-doers, even though this is self-evidently wrong. People having vision and understanding and those who are slaves to their desires cannot be equal in the sight of God.

After this, Muslims who at that time were inflicted with all kinds of oppression and injustice are assured and told to persevere on *tawhīd*; they shall be richly rewarded from God and if it becomes difficult for them to live in their land, then they should rest assured that vast is God's earth.

After this, a vehement declaration of acquittal from polytheism and polytheists is made through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). The purpose is that it becomes evident to the disbelievers that they cannot make God's servants submit to polytheism through coercion and oppression.

At the end, Muslims are given glad tidings of success and assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) that his call will only appeal to men of understanding; it is not his responsibility to guide those who have become the fuel of Hell because of their evil deeds. Readers may study the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

### Text and Translation

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِثٌ آتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي

الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٩) قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (١٠) قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ (١١) وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٢) قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣) قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدْ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي (١٤) فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١٥) لَهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهَ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦) وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ (١٧) الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (١٨) أَفَمَن حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ أَفَأَنْتَ تُنْقِذُ مَن فِي النَّارِ (١٩) لَكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِّنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ (٢٠)

Can he who spends the night humbly kneeling and prostrating before his Lord, who fears the Hereafter and hopes to earn the mercy of his Lord [and others devoid of these traits be equal?] Ask: “Are those who have knowledge and vision equal to those who have none?” Only men of understanding can be reminded. (9)

Say: “O Believers! Fear your Lord. Those who do virtuous deeds in this world shall receive a good reward in the Hereafter. And vast is God’s earth. Those who persevere with fortitude shall be recompensed without measure.” (10)

Say: “I have been directed to worship God with sincere obedience and I have been directed to be the first Muslim.” Say: “I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the torment of a fateful day.” (11-13)

Say: “God alone I worship with His sincere obedience; so you may worship others besides Him whom you want.” Say: “The real losers are those who put themselves and their kinsfolk in loss on the Day of Judgement. Bear in mind that this is the real loss. For them, there shall be sheets of fire from above them and also from beneath them! It is this from which God is warning them of. O My Servants! Thus Fear Me alone.” (14-16)

And those who abstained from getting entangled in worshipping al-Tāghūt and remained devoted to God, there are glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants who listen carefully to what is said to them and follow what is the best in it. It is they whom God has guided and it

is they who are men of intellect. (17-18)

He who has become worthy of punishment [and is in Hell], will then you be able to rescue him who is in Hell. However, those who fear their Lord shall be lodged in embellished lofty mansions. Streams will be running below them. This is a certain promise of God. God does not break His promise. (19-20)

### Explanation

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي  
الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٩)<sup>8</sup>

I have explained at a number of place in this *tafsīr* that a part of the discourse is suppressed in such interrogative sentences that can be revealed from the emphatic words of the speaker. An example of this style can be seen in verse 22 ahead. Such a style testifies to the firm conviction of the speaker, and it is also evident from this that there is no room for any difference of opinion for the addressee in response to this question. Moreover, a part of the discourse becomes evident without even expressing it.

If this interrogative style of the verse is unveiled, then it would mean: Can the one who humbly and obediently spends the night while prostrating before his Lord and while standing and the one who fears the Hereafter and is hopeful of God's mercy be equal to the one who is engrossed in his arrogance and has no fear of the Hereafter nor gives importance to God's mercy?

It automatically emanates from this question that the two cannot be equal, and this is such an obvious reality that the addressee cannot negate it. However, in spite of this, these foolish people by inventing the belief of polytheism and intercession have equated the two. This is because if salvation in the Hereafter depends on the intercession of the deities instead of on faith and righteous deeds, then neither does the fear of God's justice remains nor is there any need for faith and righteous deeds.

After studying the style of the verse and its occasion and context, let us now analyze its components.

The real meaning of *فُنُورٌ* is to be humble and modest before God. This is basically a spiritual state the best expression of which is found in the

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8. Can he who spends the night humbly kneeling and prostrating before his Lord, who fears the Hereafter and hopes to earn the mercy of his Lord [and others devoid of these traits be equal?] Ask: "Are those who have knowledge and vision equal to those who have none?" Only men of understanding can be reminded.

prayer, especially the night ones. The condition *آثَاءَ اللَّيْلِ* has been specially imposed because the night prayer is free of pretence. So the humility of people who diligently adhere to it is beyond doubt.

The words *سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا* portray the prayer of these people: at times, they are in prostration and at times they are standing. They also express their restlessness and anxiety: when others are in deep slumber in their comfortable beds, these people stand and prostrate in prayer before their Lord to obtain His pleasure.

The words *يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ* depict the inner state of their prayer: the fear of the Hereafter and hope of God's mercy has made them restless and as such at times they are in prostration and at times standing before their Lord while forsaking their beds.

It should be borne in mind that a person's relationship with God remains balanced as long as it remains between fear and hope. If any of the two becomes dominant, the balance is disturbed. If the element of hope becomes dominant, a person becomes indifferent to God's justice and. This opens the doors to creed of *irjā'*, in fact profanity. If the element of fear becomes dominant, a person loses hope in God and becomes pessimistic; this too breeds many evils. Long is the list of the problems that have arisen among previous nations because of this imbalance. The Qur'ān has alluded to them, and I have been directing the attention of the readers to this.

The words *هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* help unveil the suppressed part I have referred to earlier. How is it possible that people of knowledge and people without knowledge become equal in the sight of God? It automatically follows from this that in the eyes of the Qur'ān men of knowledge are the ones who are mentioned by the words: *أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِثٌ آثَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ*. Those who are devoid of this traits are, in the view of the Qur'ān, devoid of knowledge even if they are able to travel to the moon and Mars. The reason for this is that the real knowledge needed to be guided in life is that a person knows the origin of this universe and its end as well as the attributes of its Creator and the nature of relationship he has with Him. If he is able to get hold of the key to this matter, he will be able to understand the object and purpose of his life. However, if he is not able to acquaint himself with this knowledge he will wander in the dark even though he may travel to the farthest frontiers of space.

The words *إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ* point out that the above stated facts are very clear; however, in order to accept something its mere clarity is not sufficient; it is essential that the addressees have intellect and also use

their intellect to listen to and understand these facts. People who are devoid of both knowledge and intellect can never learn a lesson from the clearest of facts. In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is also assured that if these people are not benefitting from the reminders of the Qur'ān, then neither he nor the Qur'ān is at fault; it is these people who are dunces and thick-headed.

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ  
وَأَسَعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ<sup>9</sup>

After expressing lack of hope in the attitude of the Quraysh, assurance is sounded to the poor Muslims who were being harassed by the Quraysh. The Prophet (sws) is directed by God to tell His servants to keep fearing their Lord. In other words, the foolish by inventing the beliefs of polytheism and intercession have made God's justice and reward and punishment totally meaningless; however, these servants of God should continue to fear Him. Those who lead a life of piety and virtue in this world will find a great reward for themselves in the Hereafter. As for those who are living in a fool's Paradise by relying on false intercessions, they will witness the fate of this foolishness.

The words وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَأَسَعَةٌ point to the fact that they should patiently endure the hardships and difficulties they are facing or will face in future from their enemies. They should not lose hope if they see that living in their own country has become impossible for them. Vast is God's earth. If it is not possible for them to practice their religion in this city, then the Almighty will guide them to another land where they will be able to worship God without any fear and danger.

It is evident from this verse that this *sūrah* was revealed in that period of conflict between the proponents of good and evil in which it was becoming difficult for the Muslims of Makkah to live there and they were beginning to contemplate about their future. At that time, the Almighty comforted them that if the inhabitants of this city turn them out, they should rest assured that another land would welcome them. This subject has already been discussed in this very context in *Sūrah 'Ankabūt* in the following words:

يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِذَا يَأِي فَاعْبُدُونِ (٢٩: ٥٦)

9. Say: "O Believers! Fear your Lord. Those who do virtuous deeds in this world shall receive a good reward in the Hereafter. And vast is God's earth. Those who persevere with fortitude shall be recompensed without measure."



O Servants of Mine who have professed faith! Vast is My earth; so adhere to My worship. (29:56)

The words *إِنَّمَا يُؤَقِّ الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ* sound an assurance: though the path of truth is afflicted with hardships and trial; yet servants of God who persevere in these trials will be blessed with a reward well beyond their hope and imagination; today they cannot conceive of its extent.

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ (١١) وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٢)<sup>10</sup>

After giving glad tidings to the Muslims, these verses declare their aloofness from and severing of ties with their opponents. The Prophet (sws) is told that there is no more any need to pamper his opponents; he should clearly spell out to them that he has been directed to solely worship God alone in order to sincerely obey him and has also been directed to be the first one to profess faith in Islam irrespective of the attitude others adopt. This directive was given to the Prophet (sws) at many instances in the Qur'ān; in fact, it was given to him on the very first day of his prophethood. In the beginning of this *sūrah* as well, it is mentioned very clearly as well in the following words: *إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ* (39:2-3) (Indeed, We have revealed to you this Book with the decisive truth; so worship God alone with sincere obedience to Him only. Remember that only He is worthy of sincere obedience. (39:2-3))

Each of the two verses under discussion contains two directives: to worship God and to become the first Muslim. In other words, the Prophet (sws) has been directed towards both *imān* and *islām* and has been directed to become the first Muslim; for this reason he has embraced the yolk of obedience; it is now up to others to become his supporters or else meet their fate. It needs to be kept in mind that it is the exact requirement of a prophet's status as a prophet that he be the first to accept the *imān* and *islām* he invites others to. For this reason, his status is that of the first *mu'min* and *muslim*.

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣)<sup>11</sup>

The Prophet (sws) is told that he should inform them that he cannot disobey what he has been directed to do; if he does so, then he fears the

10. Say: "I have been directed to worship God with sincere obedience and I have been directed to be the first Muslim."

11. Say: "I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the torment of a fateful day."

punishment of a very tough day; they should understand that they too have been given this directive through him and that he has delivered this to them; if they continue to be defiant to God and show indifference to the punishment of the Day of Judgement, then they should do as they like; neither will he stop them nor is he responsible for their faith.

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي (١٤) فَأَعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١٥)<sup>12</sup>

This in very clear words is a declaration of acquittal and severing of ties by the Prophet (sws). His proclamation is that he, according to the directive received from God, worships God alone and obey Him only and invites people to this as well; if they do not listen to him, then they are free to worship whomever they want to; he stands acquitted of them.

The Prophet (sws) is also told to inform them that the real losers are the ones who have put themselves and their family in loss on the Day of Judgement. In other words, all other losses are temporary and transient and can be compensated for; however, the loss on the Day of Judgement is eternal and everlasting; hence, unfortunate are the people who are ruining their Hereafter at the expense of a few blissful days of this world.

The addition of أَهْلِيهِمْ to أَنفُسَهُمْ is meant to point out the fact that each person is responsible not only for himself but also for his family. The following words of the Prophet (sws) explain this fact: أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ (Beware that each of you is a shepherd, and each person will be held accountable for his herd.)<sup>13</sup> This responsibility entails that each person should not be for worried for his own salvation but also for that his family. If a person sets a bad example for his family or through his own influence drives them to the wrong path, then he not only is responsible for his own doom but also of that of his family.

The words أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ imply that people should listen up that real loss is the one they will encounter in the Hereafter. In other words, today these people are turning a deaf ear towards this call of truth because they think that if they accept it, they will have to forsake many of their worldly interests; the fact is that this is no loss; in fact, real loss

12. Say: "God alone I worship with His sincere obedience; so you may worship others besides Him whom you want." Say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their kinsfolk in loss on the Day of Judgement. Bear in mind that this is the real loss.

13. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 412, (no. 2554).

is one whose result is eternal deprivation.

The fact mentioned in *مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي* has already been explained earlier: the only acceptable worship to God is one which is also accompanied by His sincere obedience. If a person worships God but obeys the directives of others that are against God, then such worship has no weight with God. Similarly, even in obedience sincerity is essential. If God is obeyed merely to show off or because of some worldly interest, then such a hypocritical obedience too is not acceptable to God.

Here I would like to point out something regarding the recital of the word *دِينِي*. It should be recited the way it is in the verse *لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ* (٦:١٠٩) because it is established that the Prophet (sws) would pause at the end of a verse. The opinion of Sibawayah that such a suppression is specific to a couplet is not correct in my view. Several examples of such suppression are found in the Qur'an.

لَهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهَ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ  
فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦)<sup>14</sup>

The word *ظُلَلٌ* is the plural of *ظُلَّةٌ*. Its actual meaning is *غَاشِيَةٌ* (one that covers).

The verse depicts the fate of the losers mentioned in the previous verse. It is said that fire will be their bedding and fire will be there covering. Fire in various layers will enwrap them from above and from below; it is this thing with which God warns His servants of. In other words, it is not something trivial which should be dismissed by making fun of. After this it is said in a very earnest tone: "My servants! My punishment is something very severe; so protect yourselves from it."

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ (١٧)  
الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُؤْتَوْنَ  
الْأَلْبَابِ (١٨)<sup>15</sup>

14. For them, there shall be sheets of fire from above them and also from beneath them! It is this from which God is warning them of. O My Servants! Thus Fear Me alone."

15. And those who abstained from getting entangled in worshipping al-Tāghūt and remained devoted to God, there are glad tidings. So give glad tidings to My servants who listen carefully to what is said to them and follow what is the best in it. It is they whom God has guided and it is they who are men of intellect.

I have already presented the details regarding the meaning of the word طَاغُوت in verse 256 of Sūrah Baqarah and verse 51 of Sūrah Nisā'. It is a comprehensive word to denote anything that is anti-God whether idols, deities, devils and jinn or leaders who lead people away from the worship and obedience of God.

Here in contrast to the losers whose fate is mentioned earlier, the sincere are mentioned. They are also given glad tidings of eternal success and are also lauded for their qualities which made them worthy of these glad tidings. It is said that all those servants of God who desist from worshipping others and devote themselves to God with full sincerity should be given glad tidings; so the Prophet (sws) should deliver these glad tidings to them on behalf of God that they will be blessed with eternal success.

The words الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ depict their upright nature that made them eligible to God's guidance and glad tidings. It is said that these people instead of fighting and showing aggression to the person who presents them his views, listen carefully to him and follow every sound thing said to them.

The words وَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ say that the reward of their uprightness and of their attitude of loving the truth was that they valued the Qur'ān revealed by the Almighty as guidance to mankind and God blessed them with this guidance.

The words وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْأُولُوا point to the fact that it is these people who are men of understanding and only such people can benefit from God's reminder. This is exactly what has already been said earlier in verse nine thus: إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (only men of understanding can be reminded). In Sūrah Su'ad too, it is similarly said: كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَذَكَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (38 : 29) (This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded, (38:29)).

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ أَفَأَنْتَ تُنقِذُ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (19)<sup>16</sup>

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that the qualities of those who receive God's guidance are the ones stated above. As for those on whom the law of God shall be implemented it is as if they have entered Hell; so does he want to deliver such people from Hell who have been seized by this punishment? The expression كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ refers to the

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16. He who has become worthy of punishment [and is in Hell], will then you be able to rescue him who is in Hell.

overall verdict of God which He delivered in response to the challenge thrown by Satan. The Almighty had told him that whoever follows him from among men or jinn will be admitted to Hell together with him. In other words, this overall verdict has been given; it is absolutely certain and unalterable. Those who have become its targets will necessarily end up in Hell. Who can deliver them?

لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ (٢٠)<sup>17</sup>

The particle **لَكِنَّ** here is for emendation.

The word **مَّبْنِيَّةٌ** here means “furnished”. In Arabic, just as the expression **بَنَى الدَّارَ** means “to build a house”, it also means “to furnish a house”. Our exegetes have not paid attention to this second meaning; however, parallels exist of this meaning not only in the Qur’ān but also in classical Arabic. Further ahead at an appropriate place I will present its details.

The word **وَعَدَ اللَّهُ** is declined in the accusative from a suppressed verb and is meant to emphasize it.

In contrast to the punishment and torment mentioned earlier in verse sixteen for the disbelievers by words **لَهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ**, the reward of those who feared their Lord and abstained from polytheism is mentioned here. The verse says that there will be multi-storied buildings for them below which streams would flow. This is the firm promise of God and God never breaks His promises.

### Section III: Verses (21-35)

In the succeeding verses, the reason which led the disbelievers to show indifference to the Qur’ān is attacked: it is their love for this transient life which has hardened their hearts because of which they have an aversion for the truth. Otherwise the Qur’ān is a great favour. The hairs of those who have capability stand on their ends. The stone-hearted, however, will be deprived from the Qur’ān and will face the punishment of destruction which is destined for nations of messengers that deny their respective messenger. The Qur’ān has delineated all the facts in the best

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17. However, those who fear their Lord shall be lodged in embellished lofty mansions. Streams will be running below them. This is a certain promise of God. God does not break His promise.

of styles. Those who are opposing it will be taken to task. Blessed are those who are accepting this truth. It is these people who fear God and for them is the best reward.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

### Text and Translation

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُخْتَلِفًا  
أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٢١)  
أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرِ  
اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٢) اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ  
مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ  
يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٢٣) أَفَمَن يَتَّبِعِ بَوْحِيهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٢٤) كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ  
فَاتَّاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٥) فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ  
الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) وَلَقَدْ صَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ  
لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧) قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٢٨) صَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا  
رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ  
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٩) إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ (٣٠) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِنْدَ  
رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ (٣١) فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَذَبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ  
فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢) وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ  
(٣٣) لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٤) لِيُكَفِّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ  
الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٥)

Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the sky, and then brings forth fountains through it in the earth. Then from it produces crops of various kinds; then they dry up and you see them turn yellow. Then He crushes them to pieces. Indeed, in this is a great reminder for men of understanding,

Are they whose hearts God has opened to Islam hence are on a light from their Lord [and those whose hearts are hardened be equal to one another.] So devastation is for those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! It is these people who are in manifest error. (22)

God has revealed the best of scriptures in the form of a Book uniform in style [whose *sūrah*s occur in] pairs. The hairs on of skins those who fear their Lord stand at their ends. Then their bodies and their hearts while being softened tilt towards the remembrance of God. This is God's guidance through which He guides whom He desires. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him. (23)

Can he who makes his face a shield to the grievous punishment [and he who is protected from it be regarded equal?] And such wrongdoers will be told: "Taste the punishment of your earning." (24)

Those before them also rejected so the punishment overtook them from where they could not have even imagined. So God made them taste humiliation in this life and the punishment of the life to come is more terrible. Would that they but knew it. (25-26)

And We mentioned in this Qur'an all kinds of parables so that they may take heed: in the form of an Arabic Qur'an free from any complexity so that they may can be protected from the punishment. God states a parable of a slave who has many masters having different objectives and another slave who is in the total ownership of one master. Can both of them be alike? Only God is worthy of gratitude; however their majority does not understand this reality. (27-29)

You are to die and they too are to die. Then, on the Day of Judgement you will present your dispute before your Lord. Then who can more wrong their souls than people who invented a falsehood about God and denied the truth when it came to them? Will not the abode of such disbelievers be in Hell? (30-32)

And he who came with the truth, and those who attested to it, these people are the ones who fear God. Their Lord will have for them all that they desire. This is the reward of people who act befittingly so that God may drive away the evil consequence of their deeds they did and befittingly reward them of their deeds they did. (35)

### Explanation

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُخْتَلِفًا  
أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيَجُ فِتْرَاهُ مُصَفَّرًا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٢١)<sup>18</sup>

This verse reminds the rejecters of the Qur'an that the fate the Prophet (sws) is warning them of at that time seems far-fetched to them; they are

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18. Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the sky, and then brings forth fountains through it in the earth. Then from it produces crops of various kinds; then they dry up and you see them turn yellow. Then He crushes them to pieces. Indeed, in this is a great reminder for men of understanding,

so intoxicated with their success that they cannot think from where their dominance would see its doom even though they are continuously witnessing the fact that everything of this world is temporary and mortal. Rains pours down; from it streams of water gush forth from the earth as a result; then various kinds of vegetation and crops spring forth; later they begin to dry out and become pale; then the Almighty reduces them to bits and pieces.

The word **أَلْوَان** also means “types”. Research on this meaning of **أَلْوَان** has already been discussed at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

The expression **هَاجَ الْبَقْلُ** would mean **أَخَذَ فِي الْيَبْسِ** (the vegetation started to dry out).

The words **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ** refer to the fact that there is a great lesson for men of understanding in this observation.

The greatest reminder in this observation is that all the pleasures and joys of life are absolutely temporary and transient; hence instead of being lured away from them a person of intellect should direct his attention to the Being Who brought all these things into existence and is not dependent on any thing for His existence.

The second reminder found in it is that it is the natural obligation of people to thank their Lord Who made this arrangement in this world for their sustenance and nourishment; moreover, they should not express this gratitude to others.

The third reminder found in it is that the God Who has made this arrangement and has put everything between the heavens and the earth in the active service of people will not leave them go scot-free; in fact, there must come a day in which He will hold each person accountable for his good and evil deeds and reward or punish him according to the requisites of justice.

Here these points are enough to understand the context of the discourse. Other aspects found in this example have been explained at their appropriate place and one particular aspect shall be explained in the next verse.

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّنْ ذِكْرِ  
اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ <sup>19</sup>(٢٢)

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that divine

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19. Are they whose hearts God has opened to Islam hence are on a light from their Lord [and those whose hearts are hardened be equal to one another.] So devastation is for those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! It is these people who are in manifest error.



benefits are received in accordance with one's abilities and potentials. The mercy of God pours down on both dry and wet lands; however, all lands do not benefit from it to the same extent. Pieces of land which have the ability and potential become luxuriant and lush green and those which are barren remain in their desolate state. Similarly, the rain of the Qur'ān will also not benefit each person to the same extent: the Almighty will open the hearts of those who have managed to keep alive their natural abilities to Islam; as for those who have wasted their natural abilities and hardened their hearts will be deprived of the benefit of this rain; and doom is for such callous people who have become so hard even after God's reminders; such people are in open error. This is because not in darkness but in broad day light they lost their way in spite of the availability of God's guidance to them.

The enunciative (*khavar*) in this interrogative sentence is suppressed which I have unveiled in the translation.

The expression *ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ* actually means *مِنْ تَذَكُّيرِ اللَّهِ إِيَّاهُمْ* ie., whose hearts in spite of being reminded by God remained rock-hard.

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٢٣)<sup>20</sup>

The expression *كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا* is an attribute of the Qur'ān because every part of the Qur'ān is similar to and uniform with one another; from wherever it is opened and read, one will be reminded of all its basic teachings. Each of its groups – in fact each *sūrah* has a different style and their central themes too are different. However, in spite of this difference, there is such all-embracing uniformity in it that from whichever instance it is viewed the real majesty of the Qur'ān will become evident. The explanation I have provided with regard to the various groups of the Qur'ān is enough to prove the claim just made. The revelation of the Qur'ān in this form has a great benefit in it for the purpose of teaching. It is as if in this manner a reader is made to observe through various angles all the facts to which the Qur'ān invites its

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20. God has revealed the best of scriptures in the form of a Book uniform in style [whose *sūrahs* occur in] pairs. The hairs on the skins of those who fear their Lord stand at their ends. Then their bodies and their hearts while being softened tilt towards the remembrance of God. This is God's guidance through which He guides whom He desires. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him.

addressees.

Research on the word مَتَانِي has already been presented in the explanation of verse eighty seven of Sūrah Hījr; this word refers to the occurrence of the Qur'ānic *sūrahs* in pairs. People who think that the word means “something which is repeated often” are mistaken and their view is against linguistic principles and parallel constructions. The significance which *sūrahs* occurring in pairs has with regard to teaching has been explained in the introduction to this *tafsīr* and under the above-mentioned verse of Sūrah Hījr.

The word جُلُودُ means the hair on the skin of the body as well as the body itself. It is common in Arabic to refer to the part while speaking of the whole and refer to the whole while speaking of the part.

Since the word تَلِيْنُ is followed by the preposition إِلَى, it encompasses the meaning of تَمِيلُ (inclined to).

After these details on the words and expressions used in the verse, let us now take a look at its contents.

The Almighty says that He has revealed the best of discourses in the form of the Qur'ān each part of which is in uniformity with the other and all its *sūrahs* occur in pairs so that each of its statements is effectively entrenched in the minds of the listener and reader; from whatever aspect he may take a look, he is not eluded by the reality. Here it may be kept in mind that the state of the Torah is totally different from the Qur'ān. About the Qur'ān one can see that if after Sūrah Baqarah one recites Sūrah Al-i 'Imrān, then the central themes of both as well as their addressees, their style and their nature of arguments are different from one another. However, the various facts mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah are refreshed once again while reading Sūrah Al-i 'Imrān. On the other hand, the case of the Torah is very different. If we read Numbers after reading Leviticus, Exodus and Genesis in order there is no connection of the succeeding book with the preceding one. When the Jews lost the Torah to posterity or made changes in it a lot had to do to this disconnection of its components.

The words تَقْشَعُرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ point to the fact that such is profound effect of the Qur'ān that people who fear God that the hairs on their skins stand on their ends. If some one is not effected by this Book, then it means that his heart is devoid of God's light and has become rock-hard.

The words ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ refer to the fact that the softness which the Qur'ān creates in the hearts induces their bodies and hearts to become tender and turn towards God. It is evident what the tenderness of the heart implies; what is implied by the tenderness of the

bodies is that no speck of arrogance and haughtiness remains in them. If a person has arrogance in him, then his neck and body both become stiff and he walks stamping his feet on the ground; on the other hand, people who have the fear of God in them are humble and down to earth. The affects of this humility are evident in their gait and from every gesture and motion of the body.

The demonstrative pronoun *ذَلِكَ* in *يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ذَلِكَ* refers to the Qur'ān. In other words, this Qur'ān is the guidance revealed by God; through it, He guided whomsoever He wanted. What is implied is that the Almighty adheres to a certain established practice regarding giving guidance. According to this practice, those who were not worthy of guidance received it from the Qur'ān and those who are not worthy of it remain deprived. I have explained this established practice of God at various instances in this *tafsīr*.

The words *وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ* imply that in accordance with the above mentioned practice of God no one can guide a person who is not worthy of being guided. These words actually sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not fret over such people.

أَفَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ بَوَجهِ سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٢٤)<sup>21</sup>

The enunciative (*khavar*) in this interrogative sentence also is suppressed. I have tried to unfold it in the translation.

The verse depicts the helplessness of these arrogant people: a day will come when they will see the horrible fate of arrogantly denying in this world the reward and punishment they were warned of. Such will be the terrible nature of this punishment that in order to protect themselves from it they will try to present their faces as shields. The noblest and dearest part of a person's body is his face. The first thing that he tries to protect from any calamity is his face and does not in any circumstances let harm comes its way. However, such will be the case with the punishment of the Hereafter that the arrogant will have nothing to shield themselves with from this punishment; so they would be compelled to put forth their faces as their shields – faces with which they used to show arrogance to those who warned them of it.

The word *ظَالِمِينَ* in *تَكْسِبُونَ* refers to the arrogant people under discussion. This is because by rejecting the Qur'ān they were guilty of wronging their souls. The verse states that the

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21. Can he who makes his face a shield to the grievous punishment [and he who is protected from it be regarded equal?] And such wrongdoers will be told: "Taste the punishment of your earning."

Almighty will not have any mercy of this helplessness He will observe and they will be told that what has come before them is the result of their own earning; so, they should now taste it.

كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٥) فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)<sup>22</sup>

These verses sound a warning to the Quraysh that they should not think that the punishment with which they are being warned of is some joke. Today they are living very smoothly and hence cannot contemplate from where this punishment will land on them. Nations which preceded them also continued to deny their respective messengers because of this same malady of arrogance. At last they were seized by the torment from where they could not have even imagined it.

Consider next the words: فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا. The punishment of humiliation visited these nations because they showed arrogance before the messengers of God and denied the truth in spite of the fact that it had been conclusively communicated to them. Regarding the messengers of God, I have explained at a number of places in this *tafsir* that there exists an established practice of God: a nation that persists in denying its messenger is necessarily destroyed by the Almighty once the truth has been conclusively conveyed to it. Together with this worldly punishment, it will also have to face another one in the Hereafter which will be much harder.

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧) قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرِ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٢٨)<sup>23</sup>

The expression مثل ضرب means “to state sound advice and wisdom in the form of parables.” Parables are very effective in making people understand certain facts – especially facts that relate to an unseen world. For this reason, the prophets of God use them a lot. The Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms – all are replete with parables, and name of the

22. Those before them also rejected so the punishment overtook them from where they could not have even imagined. So God made them taste humiliation in this life and the punishment of the life to come is more terrible. Would that they but knew it.

23. And We mentioned in this Qur'an all kinds of parables so that they may take heed: in the form of an Arabic Qur'an free from any complexity so that they may can be protected from the punishment.

scripture of Solomon is “Proverbs”. For this reason, the idiom ضرب مثل also came to connote stating words of wisdom merely whether in the form of a parable or in the form of a general statement.

The words قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ expresses an attribute of the Qur’ān which specially relates to the Arabs: the Almighty has revealed this Qur’ān in an Arabic dialect free from any complexity; it is in an eloquent tongue and in a simple yet effective way instructs people of all the important things needed for success in this world and in the Hereafter. If people do not give it due importance, then this means they disregarded the greatest favour of God and if after conclusive communication of the truth they become targets of divine punishment, they thoroughly deserve it.

The verse ends on the words لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ and the second one on لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ. In other words, the foremost objective of revealing the Qur’ān in such a thorough and elaborate manner is that those who are deep in indifference may receive a reminder. The second objective is that they save themselves from the punishment which is the essential consequence of this indifference – punishment which shall not only visit them in this world if they persist in their stubbornness but also in the next one.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ<sup>24</sup>

The essence of monotheism and polytheism is explained in this verse with the help of an example. A polytheist is like a slave who has many masters each having different intents and objectives and a monotheist is like a slave who has only one master. After this the question is posed: can the two be alike? The implication is that no slave will be prepared to be in the simultaneous ownership of many masters who not only have different intents but are also at war with one another. He will like to be the slave of just one master. Man’s nature feels content to be a slave to one God because his needs and deficiencies cannot be fulfilled without believing in Him. The reason to believe in one God is not only found within himself but also in the world around him. As far as other gods are concerned, why should he become a slave to them if his needs are fulfilled by the one God. If a person does such a thing, then he in fact

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24. God states a parable of a slave who has many masters having different objectives and another slave who is in the total ownership of one master. Can both of them be alike? Only God is worthy of gratitude; however their majority does not understand this reality.

rebels against his own nature and gets himself entangled in an imbroglio which no sane person can be ready to do so.

The words الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ are the answer given by the Almighty Himself to the question raised above: only God is worthy of being grateful to. All the favours have been given by Him; hence people should only thank Him and only worship Him and show obedience to Him alone. When He has not directed people to worship any deity as His associate, why do people out of their own desire become slaves to others?

The words بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that this fact is absolutely evident; however, a majority of people do not understand it.

In the verse under discussion, a psychological argument is cited in favour of *tawhīd* which I have explained in detail in my book, *Haqīqat-i shirk o tawhīd*. Man by his nature is someone who has great courage; he is never prepared to become the slave of anyone; He becomes a slave to one God because, as pointed out earlier, this slavery is innately found in his nature, and he because of his multifarious needs and wants cannot receive comfort and help without the support of one God. Not only is there no want in Him to become a slave of others but also there is a great revulsion for it found in his nature if it has not become distorted.

The word تَشَاكَسَ points to an important psychological fact: It means تَخَالَفَ. The expression شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ would mean associates which have conflicting objectives and which are at war with one another. It may be kept in mind that the Idolaters also believed that their deities are continuously in conflict and enmity with one another; they also feel jealous of one another. For this reason, at times they would end up fighting with one another in such a manner that this brawl lasts for ages. Now why should a person call his doom by becoming a slave to all such deities simultaneously. Human nature will never be prepared to go through this humiliation; however, an Idolater will tolerate this, which clearly shows that he is totally devoid of integrity and also deprived of the sense that he is a human being.

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ (٣٠) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ (٣١)<sup>25</sup>

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his companions and a warning to their enemies: this issue of *tawhīd* which is under discussion will one day be presented in the court of God. The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that he is to die and his enemies too

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25. You are to die and they too are to die. Then, on the Day of Judgement you will present your dispute before your Lord.

are going to die. Then both of them shall be presented in the court of God as two contestants of a case. The Prophet (sws) will be asked what he taught and communicated to them; they will be asked about the response they gave. It will be here that the final verdict will be delivered as to who is right and who is wrong. In other words, there is no need for the Prophet (sws) to feel sorrow at their frivolous talk and stubbornness. In this world, Satan has been afforded the opportunity to make hay and so his mission is thriving. It is the requirement of God's wisdom that this should go on till a certain period of time; however, one day this respite is going to end and all this matter will be presented in the court of God. On that Day, successful and dominant will be those who adhered to the truth.

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى  
لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢) وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (٣٣)<sup>26</sup>

These verses depict in advance the verdict which will be delivered on that day: who will be more unfortunate and wrongful to his soul than he who invented a falsehood against God, and when the Almighty revealed a truth to rectify this falsehood they denied it. Inventing falsehood against God refers to polytheism. This is because the polytheists would falsely claim about their deities that God has made them His partners whereas God has not revealed any sanction in their favour. The word الصِّدْق here refers to the Qur'ān because it has resolved all differences and presented the truth.

The conditional clause إِذْ جَاءَهُ refers to the aspect of conclusive communication of the truth: if there is an element of doubt in a truth and as a result a person is deprived of it, then he may have a legitimate excuse for this; however, if a truth stares a person in the eye and a stubborn person continues to deny it, then this would mean that he is actually denying the existence of the dazzling midday sun.

The words أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ pose the question: Should not Hell be the abode of such die-hard disbelievers? In other words, a person who has even a slight sense in him will acknowledge that Hell should be the abode of such people. Thus, this is what will happen on that day. All such disbelievers will fill the belly of Hell on that Day.

In the sentence وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ the particle مَنْ

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26. Then who can more wrong their souls than people who invented a falsehood about God and denied the truth when it came to them? Will not the abode of such disbelievers be in Hell? And he who came with the truth, and those who attested to it, these people are the ones who fear God.

is suppressed before *صَدَّقَ بِهِ* and the word *مُتَّقُونَ* here refers to protection from the torment of Hell.

The above sentence mentions the reward of the other group comprising the one who brought the Qur'ān and those who attested to it: on that day, the ones who will be spared from Hell will be he who brought the Qur'ān ie., Muḥammad (sws) and those who attested to this truth. The preposition *بِ* after *صَدَّقَ* indicates that these people wholeheartedly professed faith in this Book.

لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٤)<sup>27</sup>

This in very comprehensive words is a statement of the reward of such people: they will have everything with their Lord which they desire; no impediment will be left for their desires to be fulfilled. God will grant all their wishes. It is evident from the words *عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ* that the highest status a person can attain is nearness to God and not merging in His person, as understood by a group of *sūfīs*.

The words *جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ* sound a warning that the reward just mentioned is for those who befittingly practice religion. Not every one who claims to profess faith in the Qur'ān will deserve this fate. Only those will be worthy of this fate who besides having faith also befittingly act on the directives of religion.

لِيُكَفِّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٥)<sup>28</sup>

This verse mentions the purpose of the day of reward and punishment mentioned above: he will wipe away the evil consequences of the deeds of His servants who befittingly practice religion and bless them with a befitting reward for their deeds. It should be kept in mind that in this world a person can neither have comprehensive knowledge of the consequences of his evil deeds nor of the weight of his good deeds. This world has a very limited span and the reward and punishment discussed in this verse relates to a world whose reward is eternal and whose punishment is also eternal. That is why the words *أَسْوَأَ* and *أَحْسَنَ* are used in comparison. What is implied is that the Almighty has prescribed a Day of Judgement so that He may protect those of His people who adhere to faith from the consequences of the darker aspects of his deeds

27. Their Lord will have for them all that they desire. This is the reward of people who act befittingly so that

28. God may drive away the evil consequence of their deeds they did and befittingly reward them of their deeds they did.



and bless them with the noblest aspects of their deeds. In other words, this verse guides man that he should not merely consider the immediate effects and consequences of his deeds but also on those of their effects and consequences which will cast their influence on these people in the eternal life to come.

#### Section IV: Verses (36-52)

The succeeding verses sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should tell those people who are intimidating him through their deities that except for this Lord Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth no one can harm or give benefit to him. He should tell them to do whatever they like. The Prophet (sws) should do whatever he is doing without any inhibition; he is only responsible for his own self; he is not responsible for the belief or disbelief of others; if they are relying on their alleged intercession, then he should explain its reality to them and if they show arrogance on their worldly successes, then he should explain their transient nature to them.

Readers may now proceed the verses ahead.

#### Text and Translation

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٦) وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُضِلٍّ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انْتِقَامٍ (٣٧) وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٣٨) قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩) مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ (٤٠) إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (٤١) اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فِيمِمْسِكَ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٢) أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ قُلْ أُولَئِكَ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٣) قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤)

وَإِذَا دُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا دُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ  
 إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٥) قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ  
 تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٦) وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِنْ سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ  
 يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ (٤٧) وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ  
 (٤٨) فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ بَلْ  
 هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِن أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٩) قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا  
 كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٥٠) فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ  
 سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥١) أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)

Is God not all-sufficient for His servant? And they threaten you with those they have made besides Him. And he whom God leads astray has none to guide him. And he whom God guides none can lead astray. Is God not mighty and capable of revenge? (36-37)

And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will reply: "God." Say: "Do you think then that, if God intended to afflict me, these things which you worship could relieve my affliction; or that if He intended to bless me in some way, they could stop Him?" Say: "God is sufficient for me and for those who trust put their trust in Him alone." (38)

Say: "My people! Do what you wish; I will do as I wish. You shall soon learn who will be seized by a torment that will disgrace him, and who will be seized by a torment everlasting." (39-40)

And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the guidance of people. So he who receives guidance it will be his own good; and he who goes astray shall do so at his own peril. And you are not one who imposes on others. (41)

God alone gives death to people at the time of their demise and also to those, whose time of death has not arrived, in the state of sleep. So those about whom He has decided to give death he keeps them and others He restores for a time ordained. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect. (42)

Have they set up other intercessors besides God? Say: "Even though they have no power or understanding?" Say: "Intercession is wholly in the hands of God. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth.

Then to Him shall you be returned.” And when only God is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in Hereafter shrink with aversion; but when others besides God are mentioned, they are delighted. Say: “Lord! Creator of the heavens and the earth, who has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest, You will give your verdict on the disputes of Your servants.” (43-46)

And if those who are guilty of polytheism possessed all the treasures of the earth and as much besides, they would like to offer it to redeem themselves from the evil torment of the Day of Judgement. And from God they will be faced with something they never thought of. And the evil consequences of their deeds will come before them and they will be encompassed with that which they ridiculed. (47-48)

So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourselves, he says: “I acquired this through my planning.” In fact, this is a trial; yet most people do not know this fact. The same was said by those before them; but their earning could not benefit them. Thus the evil consequences of their deeds came before them and those also who are guilty of polytheism the evil consequences of their deeds will soon come before them. And they can never defeat Us. Have these people not been able to know the fact that it is God Who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases? Surely, there are signs in this for those who believe. (49-52)

### Explanation

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ  
(٣٦) وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُضِلٍّ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انْتِقَامٍ (٣٧)<sup>29</sup>

These verses sound assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). The polytheists would threaten him with the wrath of their deities on his message of monotheism. They would say that if he continues to oppose them they will afflict him with some hardship. They are told that do not these naïve people think that God is sufficient to protect and give sustenance to His prophet and from the alleged danger he will be put into by their deities. God is sufficient for a person who believes in him. Without the permission of God nothing can harm him. If a person is

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29. Is God not all-sufficient for His servant? And they threaten you with those they have made besides Him. And he whom God leads astray has none to guide him. And he whom God guides none can lead astray. Is God not mighty and capable of revenge?

afflicted with the fear that something can harm him without God's permission, then he thinks that God is not sufficient for his protection and sustenance and this obviously is disbelief and polytheism.

The words *وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُضِلٍّ* express rebuke on the ignorance of the polytheists. If these people are making such naïve and foolish statements, it is because they have brought themselves into the ambit of God's punishment because of their misdeeds; they have now become targets of God's law. For this reason, God has led them astray and those who are led astray by God can be guided by none. This is a reference to the established practice of God to which I have indicated at a number of places in this *tafsīr*. It is mentioned here to assure the Prophet (sws): he should not even care about what these arrogant people say; no one can guide such a lot.

The words *أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انْتِقَامٍ* mean that if God is not sufficient for His servants, then this would mean that He is not *عَزِيزٌ* (powerful); the fact is that He is *عَزِيزٌ* and he who is not *عَزِيزٌ* cannot be God. At the same time, He is also *ذِي انْتِقَامٍ*. This means that He does not spare those who violate His rights nor forgives those who commit excesses against His servants; in fact, He takes revenge for each and every thing. The above words are in the form of a question because they refer to obvious attributes of God. One cannot imagine God without them. So when God is powerful and metes out justice and revenge, then His servants should fully trust Him; He will protect them from every danger.

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٣٨)<sup>30</sup>

The verse implies that these people are afflicted with contradictory views. On the one hand, when they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth they reply that it is God, and, on the other hand, they have set up partners with God and are threatening the believers through them as well. In other words, in their view, God is the creator but He is not the master and controller of the world He has created. The

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30. And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will reply: "God." Say: "Do you think then that, if God intended to afflict me, these things which you worship could relieve my affliction; or that if He intended to bless me in some way, they could stop Him?" Say: "God is sufficient for me and for those who trust put their trust in Him alone."

Prophet (sws) is told to ask them that if God intends to harm him, can their alleged deities protect him; similarly, if God wants to bless him with some favour can these idols made of stones stop God from this. I have already discussed the word أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ at another place in this *tafsīr* and shown that when it occurs in the given context it signifies disgust and wonder on the part of the speaker.

The words قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ say that the Prophet (sws) should inform these naïve people that God is sufficient for him; neither does he fear anyone other than God nor does he have hope from anyone other than God; God looks after all his needs and for this reason he trusts God alone and all those who trust, trust God; the hopes of those who trust others will never materialize.

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩) مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٤٠)<sup>31</sup>

The words عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِي are suppressed after إِنِّي عَامِلٌ to avoid repetition. The Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to declare his acquittal from the disbelievers in these verses. He should tell them that if they are not willing to listen to him then they should continue doing what they are and he will stick to his ways; soon they will know who is visited by the punishment that humiliates and who is struck by the calamity that completely settles at a place. In other words, what he is communicating to them is that if they are not going to desist from their wrong attitude he will not desist from his preaching efforts; the future will tell who is disgraced who is successful; who is destroyed forever and who is kept intact by God. The punishment is qualified by the word “disgraceful” because it is in retribution to the arrogance of the opponents. The words عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ refers to that punishment which visits a nation in a manner that it takes root and totally ravishes it. I have explained at other instances of this *tafsīr* that there are two types of torments that visit a nation: one is merely to remind and admonish them; such a torment comes like a wave and goes away after sounding admonishment; another type of torment is one which totally destroys a nation; this torment is the one which visits the nation of a messenger after it deliberately denies the truth communicated to it by the messenger. For this reason, it is called عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ.

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31. Say: “My people! Do what you wish; I will do as I wish. You shall soon learn who will be seized by a torment that will disgrace him, and who will be seized by a torment everlasting.”

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ  
عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (٤١)<sup>32</sup>

After asking the Prophet (sws) to declare his acquittal, these words are meant to assure him: he has fulfilled the responsibility that was imposed on him and he need not fret over his nation now. The Almighty has revealed the Book with truth to him for the guidance of people. In other words, through this Book the Almighty has completely ascertained the truth from falsehood; people who now accept it will succeed in this world and in the next and those who reject it will only lead themselves astray; they will not harm the Prophet (sws) in any manner; he was only responsible to invite them to the truth. It is not his responsibility that he forcibly bring them to faith; he has fulfilled his responsibility; it is now their responsibility; for this reason, he should leave them to themselves.

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا  
الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٢)<sup>33</sup>

The word *يَتَوَفَّاها* is suppressed after *لَمْ تَمُتْ*. I have expressed it in my translation.

The verse refers to the fact that life and death are completely in the hands of God. The souls of those whose life-cycle is completed are claimed by Him and those who still have time left are everyday made by Him to observe death and raising to life from death. When a person sleeps everyday, it is as if he is made to observe death and when he wakes up in the morning, it is as if he is made to observe life after death. In this manner, it is as if every person every day is made to think that he should not regard his life to be eternal; he should, in fact, keep in mind that God has given him life for a fixed period of time; his life is in the hands of God at all times and whenever He wants, that person can be given death.

The words *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ* say that there are many signs in this for those who reflect.

32. And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth for the guidance of people. So he who receives guidance it will be his own good; and he who goes astray shall do so at his own peril. And you are not one who imposes on others.

33. God alone gives death to people at the time of their demise and also to those, whose time of death has not arrived, in the state of sleep. So those about whom He has decided to give death he keeps them and others He restores for a time ordained. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect.

The first sign in this phenomenon is that just as creation and authority rests with God, similarly, life and death are also in His control. It follows from this that when no one has any say in life and death how can someone become the person to whom people return? Hence it is only God Who is worthy of being trusted; it is on Him those who trust should trust.

The second sign is that re-creation is not the slightest improbable. In this world, a person witnesses a rehearsal of life and death everyday if only he is a man of vision. The supplication which a believer recites when he wakes up in the morning is a reflection of this vision of his.<sup>34</sup>

The third sign in this is that this universe from its very existence is the best place for the education of facts on which rests a person's success and salvation – facts to which the Qur'ān is inviting people.

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ قُلْ أَوَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٣)<sup>35</sup>

This question expresses wonder and rebuke: have these naïve people set up intercessors for themselves besides God in spite of these clear facts and think that if God tries to seize them, these intercessors will protect them. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that would they still hope that these people would intercede for them before God even if they have no say on anything and also do not have any knowledge and cognizance. The implication is that as far as authority is concerned, no one except God has it. As far as the extent of knowledge and cognizance are concerned, here too no one has the ability to add to God's knowledge in any matter – in particular, these idols on whose intercession they are depending have no basis what to speak of they having any knowledge and cognizance.

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤)<sup>36</sup>

The verse bids the Prophet (sws) to inform these naïve people that intercession totally rests in the hands of God; without his permission no one will dare intercede for someone. After this, whoever speaks will speak for someone about whom he is given permission; moreover,

34. The words of this supplication are: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ (gratitude be to God who raised us to life after He gave us death and to Him is the return). See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, 2326, (no. 5953),

35. Have they set up other intercessors besides God? Say: "Even though they have no power or understanding?"

36. Say: "Intercession is wholly in the hands of God. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. Then to Him shall you be returned."

whatever he says will be the absolute truth; no one will be able to lie before God. All the afore-mentioned conditions on intercession have been imposed by the Qur'an at various places and I have been explaining them all through. It is this which is mentioned here in a comprehensive manner. These people contend that whatever their deeds, their deities will in any case save them from God's grasp. They will see the consequence of this baseless desire on the Day of Judgement.

The words *لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ* express the fact that the dominion of the heavens and the earth is under God's jurisdiction and everyone is going to come before Him alone. Neither does anyone else have any share in His dominion nor is anyone else the being to whom people will return.

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ  
إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٥)<sup>37</sup>

This verse expresses one of the prominent causes of polytheism and intercession. Since in the Hereafter complete justice of God and His reward and punishment shall manifest themselves and since believing in it makes a person liable to some very heavy responsibilities, people who want to evade these responsibilities seek refuge in polytheism and intercession. They do not have the strength and courage to fulfill the consequences of their faith and deeds and also are not ready to tolerate any restriction on their base desires. For this reason, they, in the first place, do not believe in the Hereafter; and if they do, they try to protect themselves from all its dangers in their own view by inventing the creeds of polytheism and intercession. These people totally trust their alleged intercessors. For this reason, as soon as *tawhīd* is mentioned before them, their hearts start sink because at that time the Hereafter stares them in the eye with all its dreadfulness; however, when their alleged deities and intercessors are mentioned, they breathe with satisfaction because in this situation they get a license to lead this life while disregarding the life to come. It is evident from this that the baseless doctrine of intercession is a scapegoat to evade the responsibilities of the Hereafter.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي

37. And when only God is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in Hereafter shrink with aversion; but when others besides God are mentioned, they are delighted.



مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ<sup>38</sup>(٤٦)

This verse urges the Prophet (sws) to supplicate for his people. It is evident from this instruction that he should consign the matter of people to God; these people are not ready to wake from their deceptive dream of living in a fool's paradise they have created and face the truth; they will live and die in this paradise; however, the Prophet (sws) should pray to the God Who has created the heavens and the earth from nothingness and Who is aware of the seen and the unseen that He should one day resolve the differences in which people are entangled today; He shall definitely bring about a day in which His perfect justice shall manifest itself. Since it is on the manifestation of perfect justice that the meaningfulness of this world depends and it is a result of this manifestation that it would be proven that God is just and wise, the Prophet (sws) is urged to make this supplication.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِنْ سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ<sup>39</sup>(٤٧)

The verse says that these Idolaters have created these subterfuges to evade the Hereafter because of their love for this world; however, when they face the horrors of the Day of Judgement, they would like that if they have whatever is in the earth and an equal more to give it in ransom for the torment and set themselves free.

The words *وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ* imply that in the first place a person is very generous in giving allowance to his desires; furthermore, he sees that even if he continues to perpetrate a bigger crime after another he is not taken to account for this. For this reason, he becomes totally oblivious of the Hereafter and if someone tries to direct his attention to it and makes him understand the justice and revenge of God, he regards this to be a fabrication of one's imagination; he thinks that if ever the Hereafter is going to come, how can the Almighty deal with them in the manner the Qur'ān is warning them of. This is a trial in which the majority is entangled. In order to warn such people, it is said

38. Say: "Lord! Creator of the heavens and the earth, who has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest, You will give your verdict on the disputes of Your servants."

39. And if those who are guilty of polytheism possessed all the treasures of the earth and as much besides, they would like to offer it to redeem themselves from the evil torment of the Day of Judgement. And from God they will be faced with something they never thought of.

that when the Day of Accountability arrives then what will manifest from God for these people who are dreaming such luring dreams cannot even be imagined by them today. Today they are misled by His graciousness; however, when they see the majesty of His justice and revenge their eyes will be opened and they will come to realize that God is as great in justice and revenge and as He is in His graciousness.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٤٨)<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, a person does not clearly see the severity of his evil deeds in this world; he is not able to evaluate here the colour in which the produce of a certain evil deed or concept whose seeds he had sown started to bloom and the extent of poisonous fruits it produced. In the Hereafter, the results of all his views and deeds will manifest themselves before him in their real form, and he will see that he has been embraced from all sides by things he regarded as trivial and made fun of.

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٩)<sup>41</sup>

Verse eight of this *sūrah* has explained what is mentioned in this verse: man is afflicted with this strange weakness that when he is afflicted with some hardship, he pleads before God; however, once the Almighty relieves him of this hardship and blesses him with His favours, man forgets both God and the hardship he had been facing and attributes these favours to others; he says that the grace and magnanimity of such and such a person was responsible for them, as is mentioned in verse eight; or he regards these favours to be a result of his own planning and wisdom and of the marvels of science, as is referred to by the verse under discussion. In other words, he regards the source of these favours to be others except God or to his own self. Both these cases are nothing but polytheism; this is because the favour a person receives is from God alone and others are not more than means for this favour; scientific marvels and his own abilities are God's gifts. If these gifts become a source of his success then they do so because of God's permission.

The words *فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا* express the fact that none of

40. And the evil consequences of their deeds will come before them and they will be encompassed with that which they ridiculed.

41. So when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he calls out to Us. Then We look upon Him with favour from Ourselves, he says: "I acquired this through my planning." In fact, this is a trial; yet most people do not know this fact.

the favours given to a person is from anyone other than God or the result of his own abilities or because he deserves it; he receives all these favours from God and through them He actually tries and tests His servants whether they show gratitude to Him or show arrogance and haughtiness. However, the majority of people is not aware of this fact and this leads them to polytheism and anarchy. This fact is very clearly stated in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ where the character of Qārūn is portrayed:

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءَ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا (٢٨: ٧٦-٧٨)

Korah belonged to the people of Moses, but he behaved rebelliously with them. And We gave him so many treasures that their keys could only be lifted by a group of powerful men. Remember the time when his people said to him: “Do not show conceit; God does not like the conceited. But seek the abode of the Hereafter with whatever God has bestowed on you, and forget not your share in this world and do good as God has been good to you, and seek not anarchy in the land. God does not like the anarchists.” He replied: “I have obtained this wealth because of my the knowledge I possess.” Does he not know that God has destroyed many nations before him who were stronger than him in might and greater in number. (28: 76-78)

قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٥٠)<sup>42</sup>

The verse expresses the fact that before the arrogant leaders of the Qurash this statement ie., (I acquired this through my planning, (39:49)) was made by previous nations as well; one of them was Qārūn (Korah). It is said that whoever was afflicted with this conceited notion could not benefit from the knowledge they had obtained through their abilities and through science when God decided to seize them. Thus Qur’ān itself has cited the example of

42. The same was said by those before them; but their earning could not benefit them. Thus the evil consequences of their deeds came before them

Korah: he regarded himself to be an expert in trade and financial matters but God sunk him and all his treasures in the earth and at that time none of his strategies could be of any avail to him.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥١)<sup>43</sup>

The verse says that evil consequence of the deeds of people who were obsessed by this conceited notion came before them. In other words, those among the Quraysh who were guilty of this oppression they will soon face the results of their evil deeds and what they earned in an evil way and when God will seize them, they will not be able to escape from His grasp.

أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)<sup>44</sup>

What is said in the above verse has already been discussed in verse 27 of Sūrah Rūm. The only difference is that there the words are: *أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا* and here the words are: *أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا*. In other words, if a person has vision and insight and also uses his intellect, then he cannot be in doubt that sustenance and blessings relate to man's planning and authority; on the contrary, all of it is based on God's wisdom and will. It is He Who gives it in large quantities to whomsoever He wills and small quantities to whomsoever He wills. There are so many people who are born with a silver spoon in their mouths without any effort or struggle and so many who struggle very hard in this world and also have the knowledge to earn worldly gains; however, they are able to earn only that amount which God has ordained for them. This also is a common observation that today a person is a millionaire or a billionaire and possesses great power and authority; however, the very next day he goes bankrupt or ends up in jail. If, in spite of these observations all around him, a person is arrogant enough to believe that it is his own knowledge and planning that have been responsible for his status and wealth (إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ), then it must be conceded that there is something wrong with his senses.

The words *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ* refer to the fact that those who

43. and those also who are guilty of polytheism the evil consequences of their deeds will soon come before them. And they can never defeat Us.

44. Have these people not been able to know the fact that it is God Who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases? Surely, there are signs in this for those who believe.

observe the way God gives abundantly to some and stringently to others will be able to see many realities about God's attributes. For example:

– The sovereignty of this universe lies in the hands of God. It is in His power alone to give people and in His power alone to take away from people. No one shares this authority with Him. Hence a person must always repose his trust in Him.

– All the works of God are governed by His mercy and wisdom. If He gives abundantly to some people in this world, then this is based on His wisdom and if He gives stringently to some people in this world, then this too is based on His wisdom. He intends to test those to whom He gives abundantly whether they express gratitude to Him or not and see whether those to whom He gives less show patience or not; it will be on the Day of Judgement when the verdict of success or failure about people will be passed in this regard.

– This world is a place of trial and not a place of reward; every person is being tested here and in order that the results of this trial manifest themselves, it is essential that the Day of Judgement come about.

The verb in لَقَوْمٌ يُؤْمِنُونَ, in my opinion, is meant to express intention. Many examples of such usage of verbs have been seen in previous *sūrahs*. It is a fact that it is generally not because the truth is not evident to man that he strays into error in this world but more because he the truth is evident to him yet he is not ready to accept it. There are a number of reasons for this – the details of which have been discussed in the explanation of earlier *sūrahs*.

### Section V: Verses (53-63)

In the verses coming up, the Idolaters are warned that the back door they have opened to polytheism and intercession will not be able to save them; on the contrary, they will only facilitate their destruction. The path to success hinges on focussing attention towards God with sincerity of heart and on following this best of Books which has been revealed by Him for their guidance. Otherwise, they should remember that very soon the time will come when they will lament and regret their foolishness but at that time this will be of no use to them. Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

#### Text and Translation

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ

جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعُفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٣) وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلُمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٥٤) وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٥٥) أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَىٰ عَلَىٰ مَا قَرَّرْتُ فِي جَنبِ اللَّهِ وَإِن كُنْتُ لَمِنَ السَّخِرِينَ (٥٦) أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٥٧) أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨) بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَتْكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٩) وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٦٠) وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦١) اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (٦٢) لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٣)

Say: "O My Servants who have sinned against their souls, do not despair of God's mercy. God will forgive all sins. He is very Forgiving and Merciful. And turn to your Lord, and submit to Him before the torment visits you; for then you will not be helped. (53-54)

And follow the best thing that has been revealed to you by your Lord before the torment suddenly overtakes you when you are heedless. Lest any person should say: "What a pity on my blemish regarding God and indeed I was among those who would make fun." Or someone says: "If God had guided me I too would have been among those who fear." Or someone says when he sees the torment: "Could I but live again, I would be among those who are befitting in their deeds." – Yes, indeed. My revelations did come to you; but you denied them and showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers. (55-59)

And on the Day of Judgment you shall see their faces blackened who uttered falsehoods about God. Is there not in Hell a home for these haughty? And God will deliver those who feared Him in their place of peace. Harm shall not touch them nor shall they ever grieve. God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian. In this possession are the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who denied God's revelations will surely be the losers. (60-63)

### Explanation

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ

جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٣)<sup>45</sup>

One of the biggest factors leading to polytheism and innovation is a person loosing hope in God and in having bad estimations about him. I have explained a number of aspects of this state of hopelessness and harbouring bad estimations about God at various places of this *tafsīr*. Among them is also the factor that a polytheist does not have trust in God's mercy and forgiveness. For this reason, he according to his imagination fashions out some hypothetical deities who are favoured ones of God; by worshipping them, he hopes that they will intercede for him before God and secure his forgiveness from Him. Those who are inflicted with this false notion are informed by God through Muḥammad (sws) that they who have wronged their souls by sinning and by indulging in polytheism should not seek the support of others and lose hope in God's mercy. They should seek forgiveness from Him alone. He is very forgiving and merciful. He forgives the sins of those of His servants who turn to Him with sincerity.

The style and tone of this verse bears testimony to the fact that the addressees are in fact those people who are under the misconception that neither can every person access God nor does God regard the petition of every person to be worthy of acceptance. Because of this misconception, these people seek the support of others even though such a view about God is tantamount to losing hope in Him and having a bad estimation about Him – something which is not allowed in any circumstances.

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٥٤)<sup>46</sup>

The verse guides a person to the way which should be adopted by those who seek God's mercy and forgiveness. It says that a person should totally turn to God while severing ties from other means and supports, repent for his sins, seek his mercy and forgiveness and before the torment of God manifests itself should consign himself to Him. In other words, he should worship and obey God alone.

The words *وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ* can refer to the torment of Hereafter; however, contextual indication shows that it refers to the torment which visits the direct addressees of a messenger who deny him once he conclusively communicates the truth to them. After the advent of this torment, neither does the option of professing faith for someone

45. Say: "O My Servants who have sinned against their souls, do not despair of God's mercy. God will forgive all sins. He is very Forgiving and Merciful.

46. And turn to your Lord, and submit to Him before the torment visits you; for then you will not be helped.

remains nor are such people helped. The implication is that these people should not become desirous of this torment; if they want their well-being, they should repent and mend their ways before it arrives.

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ مَنْ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٥٥)<sup>47</sup>

This verse further explains the subject discussed in the previous verse: the right attitude for them is to follow the best thing which has been revealed to them by their Lord. The “best thing” obviously refers to the Qur’ān which has been alluded to as أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ (the best word) in verse twenty three of this *sūrah*. The edge Qur’ān has over other divine scriptures has been explained at a number of instances in this *tafsīr*. Thus for example:

- The Qur’ān is the final and most complete Book of God.
- It is secure from any fragment of alteration.
- It invites people to the natural religion and hence is free of the stern and harsh directives of the previous scriptures.

With specific reference to the Arabs as well, it has some aspects worthy of attention:

- It is in very eloquent and lucid Arabic the very likes of which others are not able to produce and it is a great favour of the Almighty to the Arabs that He revealed His last Book in Arabic.
- This Book was revealed as *mutashābih* and *mathānī* as a result of which its benefit doubled with respect to other divine books. For an explanation of this, verse twenty three of this *sūrah* can be consulted.
- This Book invites people to the religion of the great forefather of the Arabs: Abraham (sws). For this reason, its message is something known to the Arabs.

In other words, the verse under discussion says that it is the requisite of all these characteristics of the Book that people should wholeheartedly welcome it and absorb it in their minds. If they do not give it due importance, they should remember that if they deny it they will be visited by a torment that they cannot even imagine.

أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَى عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُ لَمِنَ السَّاخِرِينَ (٥٦)<sup>48</sup>

47. And follow the best thing that has been revealed to you by your Lord before the torment suddenly overtakes you when you are heedless.

48. Lest any person should say: “What a pity on my blemish regarding God and indeed I was among those who would make fun.”



A governing noun (*mudāf*) is suppressed before the word **أَنْ**. Examples of such suppression have been pointed out in previous *sūrahs*. The implication is that the Almighty had made all these elaborate arrangements lest the time of accountability arrives and those who are indifferent to it end up yearning about the wrong attitude they had adopted regarding God: lured away by the absorbing pleasures of this world they continued to remain oblivious of the Hereafter and went a step ahead in this cruel behaviour by making fun of those who would remind them of it.

أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٥٧)<sup>49</sup>

Or they present the excuse that had God given them guidance, they would have been among those who feared Him. The implication is that to thwart such excuses the Almighty has revealed His guidance. Now those who evade it will be fully responsible for their departure from guidance.

أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨)<sup>50</sup>

Or after observing the torment will express the desire and yearning of being given a chance to go back in the previous world so that they could become among those grateful to God.

بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَتْكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٩)<sup>51</sup>

This is an answer to the excuse mentioned in verse fifty seven: on that day, people who present such an excuse will be told that God did reveal His verses to them for their guidance; but they rejected them, showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers. In other words, if this is not the way of God that He force down His guidance in the hearts of people; He makes arrangement to guide people by teaching them, and then leaves it to their discretion whether they accept it or not. Now God has done this; but because of their arrogance they have not given it due importance.

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49. Or someone says: "If God had guided me I too would have been among those who fear."

50. Or someone says when he sees the torment: "Could I but live again, I would be among those who are befitting in their deeds."

51. – Yes, indeed. My revelations did come to you; but you denied them and showed arrogance and remained among the disbelievers.

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وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى  
لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٦٠)<sup>52</sup>

The words *كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ* allude to polytheism. I have already explained this. What is implied is that when those who impute falsehood to God by saying that He has made such and such a being His partner were rebuked that God has no partners, then without any justification merely on the basis of arrogance they insisted on this claim. On the Day of Judgement, the faces of such people will be blackened because of their arrogance.

The words *أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ* impose a question: Will not Hell be the abode of such arrogant people? The implication is that the fact that such haughty people are worthy of Hell is such a clear one that there is no possibility of any difference of opinion in this for anyone. Thus all such arrogant people will be cast into Hell.

وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦١)<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to the fate of the disbelievers, this verse states the reward of those people who remained fearful of God. The verse says that the Almighty will grant those devoid of arrogance a place in their abode of peace. The *ب* in the word *بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ* indicates the locus and the word means *مَأْمَنٌ* and *مَفْلَحٌ* which refers to Paradise. The implication is that on that day of horror, these people will be transported to such abodes where neither will they be harmed nor will they be grieved. They will be secure from all the regrets of the past and fears of the future.

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (٦٢) لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ  
كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٣)<sup>54</sup>

These verses present a summary of the whole previous discussion: God is the Creator of everything and He is not left attending to this world after creating it; in fact, He is the protector of all and for this reason all His people should trust Him; the keys of all the treasures of

52. And on the Day of Judgment you shall see their faces blackened who uttered falsehoods about God. Is there not in Hell a home for these haughty?

53. And God will deliver those who feared Him in their place of peace. Harm shall not touch them nor shall they ever grieve.

54. God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian. In this possession are the keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who denied God's revelations will surely be the losers.

the heavens and the earth are with Him; whatever people obtain from the heavens and the earth is His blessing and in the Hereafter too whatever they get will be from among His favours; those who have rejected the revelations of God and became adamant on their polytheism will certainly end up in loss; they themselves will face the evil consequences of this foolishness – no one else.

### Section VI: Verses (64-75)

Coming up are the closing verses of this *sūrah*. First, the Prophet (sws) is directed to address these foolish people and inquire from them why they ask him to worship others besides God in spite of all these clear facts; why do they do this in spite of the fact that the Almighty has sent this same revelation to people that the deeds of those who associate partners with God will go waste. After this, it is explained that these ignorant people have not understood at all the majesty of God: they are associating such things with the divinity of God which are baseless and on their basis have no fear of the Hereafter. Such is the grandeur of God that one day He will roll up the heavens and the earth in His hand and when His trumpet is sounded everyone in the heavens and the earth will become unconscious; when the trumpet will be sounded a second time everyone will rise and the earth will light up with the radiance of God. At that time, the register of accounts of people will be laid open; prophets and witnesses will be called forth and the fate of people will be decided with full justice. After this, the details of the fate met by the companions of Paradise and those of Hell are presented so that the eyes of those who are having sweet dreams are opened.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses in the light of this background.

#### Text and Translation

قُلْ أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ تَأْمُرُونِي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ (٦٤) وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكَتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٥) بَلِ اللَّهُ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٦) وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧) وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ (٦٨) وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالتَّابِئِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءَ

وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٩) وَوَقَّيْتُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٠) وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فَتِيَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١) قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوًى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٢) وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِيحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣) وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٧٤) وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٥)

Say: "O Foolish People! In spite of this, do you bid me worship a deity other than God," even though it has been revealed to you and to those before you that if you indulge in polytheism your deeds will go waste and you will be among the losers. In fact, worship God only and show gratitude to Him alone. (65-66)

And these people did not give due importance to God. On the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens also will be folded in His hand. Glorious and exalted is He above the things they associate with Him. And when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down unconscious except those who shall be spared by God. Then when the trumpet is blown again, they shall suddenly rise and gaze around them. And the earth will shine with the radiance of her Lord, and the register will be laid open and the prophets and the witnesses shall be called forth, and all shall be judged with fairness and none shall be wronged. And every soul shall be recompensed according to its deeds. And He well knows what they have been doing. (67-70)

And in throngs the disbelievers shall be led to Hell. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them: "Did there not come to you messengers from among you who proclaimed to you the revelations of your Lord and forewarned you of the meeting this day?" They will reply: "Yes," but the promise of torment for the disbelievers will be fulfilled. It shall be said to them: "Enter the gates of Hell to stay there forever." Thus what an evil abode is that of the haughty. (71-72)

And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near it and its gates will be opened, and its keepers

will say to them: "Peace be to you! Be happy; enter it forever." And they will say: "Gratitude be to God who has fulfilled His promise made with us and made us inherit the earth; we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please." So how wonderful is the reward of the righteous. (73-74)

And you shall see the angels encircling the throne of God, giving glory to their Lord while expressing praise for Him. And people shall be judged with fairness, and it shall be said: "God, Lord of the Universe, is worthy of gratitude." (75)

### Explanation

قُلْ أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ تَأْمُرُونِي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ (٦٤)<sup>55</sup>

The word جاهل refers to a person who instead of using his knowledge and intellect is led by emotions and desires. The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to ask such people that when all testimonies are in favour of God being the Creator of everything and in His control are the keys of all the heavens and the earth, then will these people still try to insist upon him to worship others besides God. It has been mentioned earlier that the Idolaters would try to strike the fear of their Idols in the heart of the Prophet (sws) by saying that if he does not stop opposing his ancestral religion he will face their wrath. It is to this statement of theirs that this verse refers to and poses the question in the style of an acquittal that even after these clear facts would they keep demanding from him to worship their idols.

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكَتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٥) بَلِ اللَّهُ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٦)<sup>56</sup>

This verse answers these foolish people and since what they were saying was absolutely absurd, they are not regarded as worthy of being addressed directly; instead, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and these people are indirectly conveyed the message which the verse states. The Prophet (sws) is told that these foolish and ignorant people are insisting upon him to embrace polytheism even though God has revealed to him and to earlier prophets that indulging in polytheism will ruin all their deeds and they will end up among the losers. The only path to success is

55. Say: "O Foolish People! In spite of this, do you bid me worship a deity other than God,"

56. Even though it has been revealed to you and to those before you that if you indulge in polytheism your deeds will go waste and you will be among the losers. In fact, worship God only and show gratitude to Him alone.

worshipping God and showing gratitude to Him.

The expression means that with polytheism whatever deeds are done even for God go waste and do not bear any fruit. He accepts the good deeds of only those of His servants who do not set up partners with God.

The words *بَلِ اللّٰهُ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ* point to the fact that the obligation a person owes to God with regard to showing gratitude to Him is fulfilled only when He worships God alone. If He associates others with God in this worship, then he cannot be considered as someone who is grateful to God, and the whole edifice of his religiosity is razed to the ground.

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِّيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧)<sup>57</sup>

The verse implies that if these foolish people have set up partners with God, then this is because they have not appreciated the true majesty and exaltedness of God. They have measured God with their limited scales. For this reason, they have not been able to distinguish between a ray of light and the sun, between a drop of water and the ocean. The fact is that on the Day of Judgement this whole earth will be in God's grasp like a handful of sand and all the heavens too will be folded up in His hands. What association can these deities have with such a mighty being so that they be regarded as His partners in administering this universe and He becomes dependent on their help.

The word *قبضة* refers to that quantity of a thing which is picked up as a handful.

The words *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ* imply that the person of God is exalted and beyond the partners these foolish people associate with Him. Such associations are not only against His holiness but also His exaltedness.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَّنظُرُونَ (٦٨)<sup>58</sup>

57. And these people did not give due importance to God. On the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens also will be folded in His hand. Glorious and exalted is He above the things they associate with Him.

58. And when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down unconscious except those who shall be spared by God. Then when the trumpet is blown again, they shall suddenly rise and gaze around

Further details are furnished here about the belief of the Idolaters regarding their deities. They reckoned that these deities are very close to God and would win such and such things for their worshippers, and if God tries to seize them, these deities would protect them because of the influence they wielded on God. The fact of the matter is that on the Day of Judgement when the trumpet is sounded for the first time, every creature on earth will fall down unconscious; only they will be secure from this who God wants to protect. Then when the trumpet is sounded for a second time, everyone will rise up and look here and there in amazement. What is implied is that when such is the horror of this day, then who can dare try to advocate and intercede for someone before God by cajoling Him; similarly, who can claim to be a peer of the God whose might is such that one sound of His trumpet can knock off people unconscious and another sound bring them back to consciousness?

It is evident from the words *إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ* that there will be some people who on that day will be secure from falling unconscious. Who will be these people? It is difficult to give a definite answer to this question. However, it is evident from the succeeding verses that angels who would be glorifying and extolling God around His throne will be the ones who will not be effected by the trumpet sound. This is merely a hint. I am not fully confident in this opinion. I will try to direct attention of our readers to certain insinuations in this regard while explaining the verse.

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمُ  
بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٩) <sup>59</sup>

The earth referred to here is the one which will come into existence on the Day of Judgement with new laws. The verse: *يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ* (٤٨:١٤) (keep in mind the day when the earth is changed into a different earth, (14:48)) refers to this earth. Our earth is lit up because of receiving light from the sun; for this reason our observation is limited to what can be felt and seen; however, that earth will be lit up by the light of God; hence, many more facts and details will come before people. The nature of this light is not explained here. The reason is that our language does not have the words to express its nature and type. However, the Qur'ān has specified its effects at many instances. Thus

them.

59. And the earth will shine with the radiance of her Lord, and the register will be laid open and the prophets and the witnesses shall be called forth, and all shall be judged with fairness and none shall be wronged.

for example it is stated in Sūrah Qāf: لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ (50: 22) (You remained heedless of this day, so We have removed the veil before you. So sharp is your eyesight today. (50:22) It is evident from this verse that today what eyes do not have the power to observe will become observable in the earth which will later come to being. Similarly, at another place, it is stated: وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ (99: 2-5) (And it casts forth all its burdens. And man cries out: “What is the matter with her?” On that Day, she will narrate all her story at the intimation of your Lord, (99:2-5)). Though these facts are not hidden even today from men of insight but those whose eyes are covered cannot see them; however, on that Day, these facts will light up from the radiance of God in such a manner that these people who today have become blind and deaf will also see them.

The words وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ refer to the affects of the appearance of God's light and radiance: the reward and punishment with which people are being warned of and they are not willing to accept it will readily manifest themselves on that Day. All veils will be lifted. The book will be placed in front. Contextual indication shows that it refers to the register of accounts of people. At other instances in the Qur'ān, calling forth of prophets and witnesses is discussed in detail. The Almighty will ask the prophets to bear witness to what they taught their people and what was their response. Details are mentioned in Sūrah Mā'idah. The word “witnesses” connotes generality and vastness. In other words, those people shall also be called forth who will be in a position to bear witness in some matter whether they are from among human beings or from among the angels. Since by status this *ummah* is شهداء الله في الأرض (God's witnesses on earth) hence the reformers and the righteous will also be summoned and they will be asked what they taught and told people and what their response was. After this testimony is presented once people are called forth, the account of each person will be judged with fairness and not the slightest of injustice will be done to anyone.

وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٠)<sup>60</sup>

This verse explains what is said in the previous one by the words: وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (and none shall be wronged): each person shall reap what he

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60. And every soul shall be recompensed according to its deeds. And He well knows what they have been doing.



sowed and what he will receive will be fully commensurate with his deeds. Thus there is no question of any injustice. Each person will reap the harvest of the crop he cultivated and taste the fruit of the tree he planted.

The words *وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ* refer to the fact that there is no possibility that God will forget any deed of a person; He is fully aware of what people are doing and everything is clearly written down in His register.

The purpose of all these details is to open the eyes of the Idolaters so that they realize how baseless are their desires and what the actual reality they will encounter is.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فَتِيَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١)<sup>61</sup>

The words *الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا* refer to the Idolaters who are under discussion. I have indicated at an appropriate place that polytheism (*shirk*) is disbelief (*kufr*). Only that belief in God is considerable to Him which is based on pure monotheism. If it is contaminated with polytheism, then it becomes disbelief.

The verse describes the consequences of the witnesses that were borne in the court of God: once these testimonies end all those guilty of disbelief will be led to Hell. Once they come near it, its gates will be opened. At another instance in the Qur'ān it is specified that Hell has seven gates and the throngs that will enter each of these gates will be categorized according to their sins.

The words *وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ* state that when the keepers of Hell see these wretched people, they will rebuke them on seeing their horrible fate and ask them whether messengers of God came to them to inform them of the horrors of this Day. In reply, these people will confess their crime and say that messengers did come to them yet it was their wretched response that made God send His promised punishment on them – the disbelievers.

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61. And in throngs the disbelievers shall be led to Hell. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them: "Did there not come to you messengers from among you who proclaimed to you the revelations of your Lord and forewarned you of the meeting this day?" They will reply: "Yes," but the promise of torment for the disbelievers will be fulfilled.

The expression *كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ*, as is explained at an appropriate place, refers to the total decision of God which He pronounced before Satan in response to the latter's challenge. The Almighty had declared that whoever follows Satan will end up in Hell together with him. Here only God's decision is referred to. At another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that these people will clearly confess their crime. Thus the words of Sūrah Mulk are: *كَلَّمَا الْقَىٰ فِيهَا فَوْحٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ* (Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'" And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell." (67:8-10)

قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٢)<sup>62</sup>

After these disbelievers utter their reply referred to above, they will be told to enter the gates of Hell and this entry is forever.

In the words *فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ* the people connoted by the word *الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ* are obviously the ones which are under discussion. This adjective sheds light on the real reason of their evasion and rejection: it is out of sheer arrogance that they evaded the truth and became worthy of this abode which has been specially reserved for the arrogant.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣)<sup>63</sup>

The word *سوق* means to lead or drive something to something. It is used both in the positive and the negative sense. When conducive winds drive the clouds of mercy to gardens and orchards, then this word is used in its positive sense. Similarly, when the companions of Hell are driven to Hell, then this word is used in its negative sense here, as is the case with the preceding verse. In the verse under discussion, it is used in its positive sense. This is because in front of them and behind the righteous

62. It shall be said to them: "Enter the gates of Hell to stay there forever." Thus what an evil abode is that of the haughty.

63. And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near it and its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say to them: "Peace be to you! Be happy; enter it forever."

as well as on their left and right there will be angels of God who in their company and custody will take them to Paradise.

The answer to the conditional clause in this verse is suppressed. A similar example of such suppression can be seen in verses 103-105 of Sūrah Šāffāt. While explaining those verses, I have tried to explain the eloquence and occasion of this suppression. At times, such is the nature of the answer of a conditional clause or sentence that words are unable to express it. On such occasions, it is suppressed:

خموشي معنی دارد که در گفتن نمی آید

(Silence has meanings which speech cannot express)

طِبُّنَّ is a word of welcome. It is like saying: “May you always be happy! May you always live in happiness and comfort! May you prosper and grow!”

The words الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا are used in contrast to الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا. It is evident from these words that since these people feared God they were never inflicted with arrogance; in fact, they listened to and accepted what the messengers of God called them to. The verse says that such people will be led to Paradise in the company of the angels until when its gates are opened to them and its keepers welcome them with salutations ... At that time, what they will acquire cannot be imagined by anyone today. At another place, the Qur’ān has used the words: (۱۷:۳۲) فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ (Then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him. (32:17)).

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَّبِعُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (۷۴)<sup>64</sup>

The word land (أَرْض) here refers to the land of Paradise which is mentioned earlier in verse 69. In this verse, it is specified that the land is the land of Paradise. When the dwellers of Paradise will see that the promises made by God through his prophets and messengers have been fulfilled one by one, then their tongues will spontaneously thank God. They will say that they are thankful to God Who fulfilled all His promises and made them the inheritors of the land of Paradise where they can move about wherever they want to. There is a subtle reference in the words

64. And they will say: “Gratitude be to God who has fulfilled His promise made with us and made us inherit the earth; we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please.” So how wonderful is the reward of the righteous.

“made them the inheritors” that this Paradise was given to Adam (sws) their father; however, Satan deprived him of it by luring him away; to regain it, the Almighty imposed the condition that the progeny of Adam should go into the world and fight against Satan; then those who win this battle will become inheritors of this Paradise. In other words, these people of Paradise will express their gratitude that they have been successful in this test and they have regained the Paradise lost by their father.

Consider next the part: *نَتَّبِعُوا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ*. it is mentioned earlier on that the dwellers of Paradise will have whatever they want. It is now said that will full liberty and authority they will move around in Paradise wherever they want to. It is evident from this that in Paradise nothing will impede the desires and intentions of a person to materialize. This is an abode which cannot be imagined of in this world. Its reality will only be understood when this new world will appear with its new laws and mankind also appears in it with new strengths and abilities, and this new earth will shine with the radiance of its Lord instead of that of the sun.

The part *فَيُثْنُ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ* occurs in exact contrast to *فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ* of verse seventy two. A requirement of this contrast was that here words like *خَاشِعِينَ* or *مُتَّقِينَ* or similar ones be used; however, this would have merely fulfilled the requirement of contrast; there would not have been much addition in meaning. Use of the word *عَامِلِينَ* has added the meaning that the real thing that is instrumental in taking a person to Paradise is his deeds. Those who are dreaming to go to Paradise on the basis of some hypothetical intercession are living in a fool’s paradise.

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٥)<sup>65</sup>

Contextual indication shows that this verse is adjacent to verse sixty nine and the angels mentioned are the ones which carry the throne of the Almighty and other near ones of this category, as is evident from the words *حَافِّينَ* and *حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ*. In Sūrah Mu’min, the next *sūrah*, they are mentioned thus: *الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ (٤٠:٧)* (Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and

65. And you shall see the angels encircling the throne of God, giving glory to their Lord while expressing praise for Him. And people shall be judged with fairness, and it shall be said: “God, Lord of the Universe, is worthy of gratitude.”

believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: “Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell.” (40:7)

This is a mention of the state of the angels on the day witnesses will be presented in this divine court. The purpose of this mention is that it becomes evident to the Idolaters – who solely depend on the intercession of the angels – that because of the horror of that day they too would be very anxious and gathered around the throne of the Almighty busy extolling Him. It should remain clear that this is the state of the angels who bear the throne of God; what then will be the state of other angels who are not as lofty in status as these angels. In other words, on that day when the loftiest of angels would only be thinking of their own self, how will they have time to intercede for others.

The words *وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ* imply that the cases of people will be decided with complete justice and truth; neither will there be any opportunity for anyone to intervene and intercede for someone nor will anyone dare intervene in this matter.

Once God’s mercy and justice manifest themselves in a perfect manner, the cry of *الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (Only God, Lord of the worlds, is worthy of praise and gratitude) will resound from every nook and corner. The believers will chant this cry and the angels of the throne will also join the believers in this chanting.

It is evident from this that what makes God worthy of praise and gratitude is His justice and His discernment of truth and falsehood. If this does not exist, then this world is a place where evil reigns supreme and people are not called to account for it. If this is the case of this world, then no one can regard its creator to be worthy of praise and gratitude. When on the Day of Judgement the perfect mercy and perfect justice manifest themselves, then the anxiety and doubt of everyone will be appeased and every part of the universe will reverberate with cries of His praise and gratitude. In other words, the dawn of praise and gratitude which people awaited will appear and this new world will dazzle with the light of God.

This brings me to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. *فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (so only God, Lord of the worlds, is worthy of praise and gratitude).